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The main body portion 32 of the container 30 has a tubular, cylindrical configuration including an axially extending cylindrical side wall 40. The side wall 40 has a cylindrical inner surface 42 centered on a longitudinal central axis 44 of the inflator 22. A second end portion 46 of the main body portion 32 is closed by a domed end wall 48. The side wall 40 and the end wall 48 define a chamber 50 in the container 30.

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IN THE CLAIMS:

TO 3600 MAIL ROOM

Please cancel claim 22 and amend claims 1, 7, 9, 10, 15, 18 and 21 as follows:

1. ~~(Amended)~~ An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

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a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member; said rupturable closure member having a first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and

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~~an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member by shearing said first portion from said second portion.~~

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7. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said rupturable closure member is plastically deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and is work hardened due to the plastic deformation.

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8. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 1 wherein said open first end of said support includes a circular rim defining an opening into said chamber, said rim having a surface engaging said closure member.

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10. (Amended) An apparatus comprising:  
an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device for inflation between a vehicle occupant and a side structure of the vehicle;  
a container storing inflation fluid under pressure for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container toward said vehicle occupant protection device;  
a rupturable closure member fixed to said container and blocking flow of inflation fluid through said passage;  
a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a first portion

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deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a second ring-shaped portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber; and

an initiator which, when actuated, ruptures said closure member by shearing said first portion from said ring-shaped portion.

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15. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 10 16

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wherein said rupturable closure member is plastically deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and is work hardened due to the plastic deformation.

18. (Amended) An apparatus for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle that has a side structure, said apparatus comprising:

an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device that is inflatable into a position between the side structure of the vehicle and a vehicle occupant; and

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an inflator for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device and for maintaining said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device in an inflated condition for at least seven seconds, said inflator consisting essentially of a stored inflation fluid under pressure, said inflation fluid consisting essentially of helium.

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21. (Amended) Apparatus as defined in claim 20, further comprising a support for supporting said closure member

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against the pressure of said inflation fluid in said container, said initiator, when actuated, causing said closure member to rupture under the pressure of said inflation fluid and opening said passage to provide a flow of inflation fluid from said container through said passage.

Please add new claims 23-31 as follows:

<sup>13</sup>  
~~23.~~ Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said inflation fluid consists essentially of helium.

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<sup>14</sup>  
~~24.~~ Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said initiator, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said first portion to shear said first portion from said second portion.

<sup>4</sup>  
~~25.~~ Apparatus as defined in claim <sup>2</sup>~~8~~, wherein said initiator, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said dome-shaped first portion to reverse said dome-shaped first portion and shear said dome-shaped first portion from said second portion.

<sup>11</sup>  
~~26.~~ Apparatus as defined in claim <sup>10</sup>~~8~~, wherein said circular rim helps define a periphery of said first portion where said closure member engages said circular rim.

<sup>12</sup>  
~~27.~~ Apparatus as defined in claim ~~9~~<sup>10</sup>, wherein said first portion extends into said chamber through said opening.

<sup>25</sup>  
~~28.~~ Apparatus as defined in claim ~~10~~<sup>16</sup>, wherein said inflation fluid consists essentially of helium.

<sup>26</sup>  
~~29.~~ Apparatus as defined in claim ~~10~~<sup>16</sup>, wherein said initiator, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said first portion to shear said first portion from said second portion.

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<sup>18</sup>  
~~30.~~ Apparatus as defined in claim ~~17~~<sup>17</sup>, wherein said initiator, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said dome-shaped first portion to reverse said dome-shaped first portion and shear said dome-shaped first portion from said second portion.

<sup>28</sup>  
~~31.~~ An apparatus for providing inflation fluid to inflate an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said apparatus comprising:

a container storing inflation fluid under pressure, said container having an outlet passage through which inflation fluid flows from said container;

a rupturable closure member fixed to said container;

a support for said rupturable closure member defining a chamber adjacent said rupturable closure member, said rupturable closure member having a dome-shaped first portion deformed into said chamber by the pressure of the inflation fluid and a ring-shaped second portion encircling said first portion outside of said chamber, second portion blocking flow of said inflation fluid through said passage; and

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an initiator that, when actuated, produces combustion gasses and a shock wave, said combustion gasses and said shock wave acting on said first portion to shear said first portion from said second portion, said inflation fluid acting on said second portion to cause said second portion to petal away from said support and open said passage to provide a flow of said inflation fluid from said container through said passage when said first portion is sheared from said second portion.